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JEAN VALJEAN

BY VICTOR HUGO

The hero-story of "Les Misérables," condensed by Ernest Ingersoll, and illustrated by Bayard, Brion, De Neuville, Lix, Morin, Scott, Vogel and Zier.

CHAPTER XI

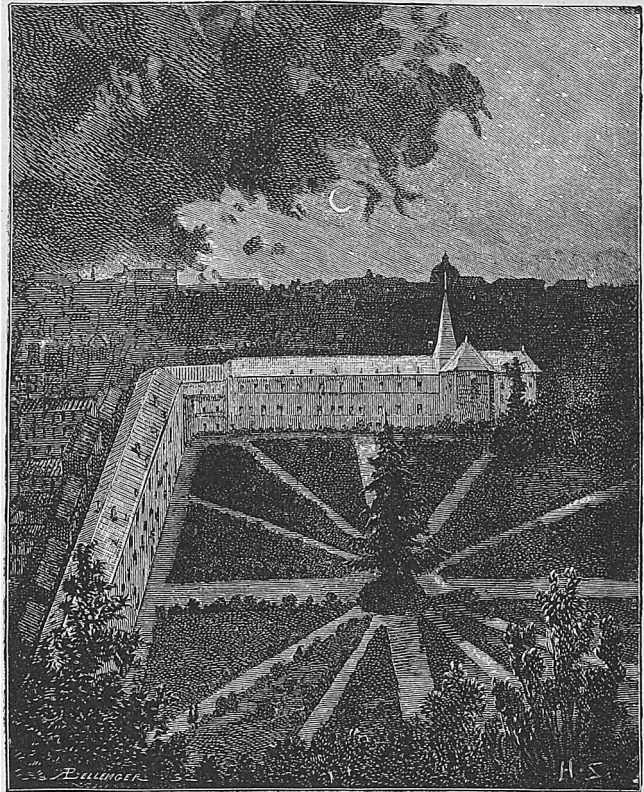
LIFE AND DEATH IN LITTLE PICPUS

THIS convent in the Little Picpus sheltered a community of cloistered nuns of the order of Bernardine, whose rule of conduct was the most austere known. It is needless to go into all the severities of silence and discipline to which its members subjected themselves. More than one woman has gone mad under their rule, and this convent, if not the entire order, has long been extinct.

At the period when this story is laid, there was a boarding-school attached to the convent, the pupils being young ladies of noble birth, and generally rich. Their discipline approached in strictness to that of the novices; yet at certain hours youth asserted its claims, and childhood sparkled in this cloister. The bell for recreation was rung, the gate creaked on its hinges, and the birds whispered to each other, "Here are the children." The hive of joy opened and each brought her honey. An irruption of youth inundated this garden, and tried to peer over the walls. Once the sound of a flute, heard day after day, caused such a fever of curiosity that it scandalized the mothers and nearly upset the institution; but the musician proved to be only an old blind exile, who played upon a flute in his garret to kill time.

There were within the walls of Little Picpus three perfectly distinct buildings—the great convent inhabited by the nuns, the school-house in which the boarders were lodged, and, lastly, what was called the little convent. The latter was a house with a garden, where dwelt old nuns of various broken orders.

The convent occupied a large trapeze, formed



THE CONVENT-GARDENS OF LITTLE PICPUS



"ONLY AN OLD BLIND EXILE"

by four streets which surrounded it like a moat, and was composed of several buildings and a garden. The main building looked on the little Rue Picpus, and at the centre of the façade dust and ashes whitened an old, low-arched gate, where the spiders made their webs, and which was only opened for an hour or two on Sundays, and on the rare occasions when the coffin of a nun left the convent; this was the public entrance to the church. Such was the house into which Jean Valjean had fallen from Heaven, as Fauchelevent asserted. He had climbed the garden-wall which formed the angle of the Rue Polonceau; the hymn of angels which he heard in the middle of the night was the nuns chanting matins; the hall which he had caught a glimpse of in the darkness, was the chapel, with sisters kneeling and prostrate on the stone floor.

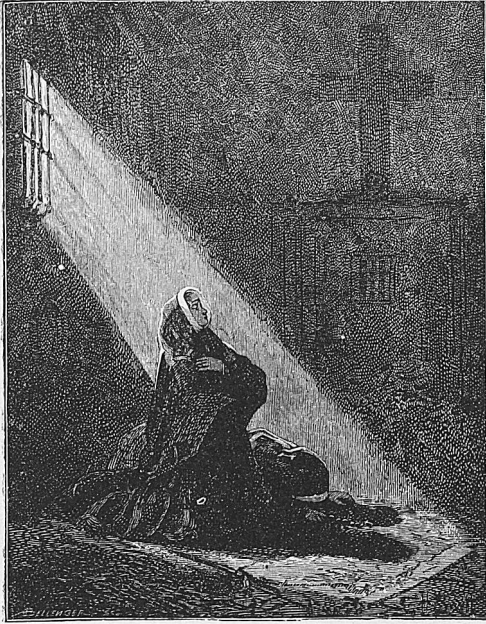
So soon as Cosette was in bed Jean Valjean and Fauchelevent supped on a glass of wine and a lump of cheese before a good blazing log; then, as the only bed in the cottage was occupied by Cosette, each threw himself on a truss of straw, but in fact neither of them slept; Jean Valjean, feeling himself discovered and Javert on his track, understood that he and Cosette were lost if they re-entered Paris. Since the new blast of wind had blown him into this retreat he had but one thought, that of remaining safely secreted in it.

On his own side Fauchelevent racked his brains. He began by declaring to himself that he understood nothing. Something had happened, but the best explanation he could imagine was, that Father Madeleine had been ruined and was fleeing from his creditors. One sole certainty was there, and it was sufficient for the old gardener: "He saved my life;" and he was firmly resolved to do anything and everything to help or to rescue the man whom he revered as his savior.

At daybreak, after meditating enormously, old Father Fauchelevent opened his eyes and saw his guest sitting on the truss of straw, and look-



"CHILDHOOD SPARKLED IN THIS CLOISTER"



THE CHAPEL

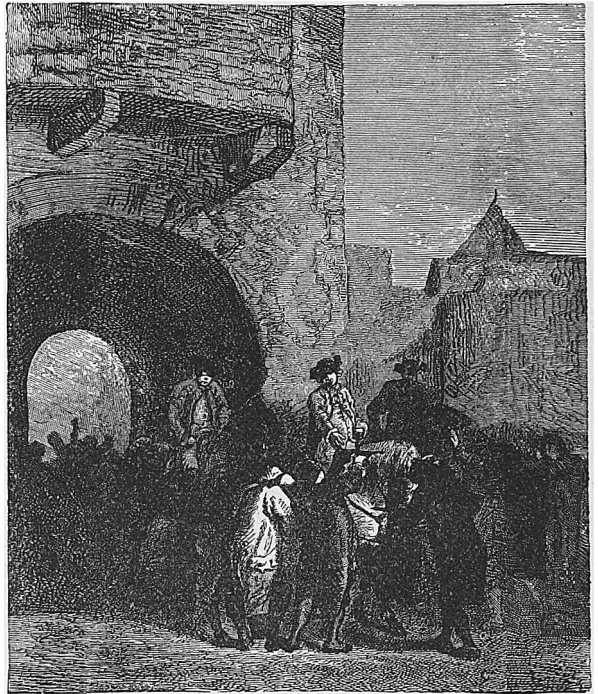
ing at the sleeping Cosette; Fauchelevent sat up too, and thus aroused Jean Valjean from his reverie.

"Monsieur Madeleine," he said, "you have arrived at a very lucky moment for you, although I ought to say a very unhappy one, for one of our ladies is dangerously ill. In consequence of this, nobody will look much this way just now. The person who is on the point of going off is a saint. It seems that she is dying, and the forty hours' prayers are being said. For to-day, we shall all be quiet here, but I do not answer for to-morrow. You say you wish to stay here, and to bring the child and educate her in the school. Well, in order to come in you must go out. It would never do for you to be found here. Ah! she is dead—there is the signal on the bells—I understand them."

And soon after, as they talked, they heard another peal—"The prioress wants me," said Fauchelevent, and at that hurried away, charging Jean Valjean on no account to leave the cottage.

The nun who had died was one held high in the estimation of the sisters. She had wished to be buried in the vault under the choir of the chapel, and although this was against the municipal law (which required that the nuns should be buried in the Vauregard cemetery, near by, but conceded the privilege that they might be buried at nightfall), the prioress proposed to allow this wish to be granted. She therefore directed that the old gardener, assisted by a muscular sister, should place the body in the vault about midnight.

It would be necessary, however, to send out a coffin, properly weighted. The prioress proposed that it be filled with earth, and Fauchelevent agreed to see that the matter



"AN OLD LOW-ARCHED GATE"

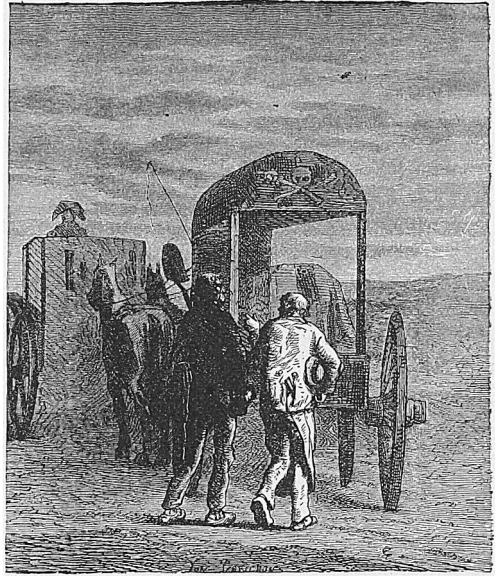
was arranged. Then he preferred a request, couching it in long and diplomatic details, that he might bring in his brother to help him work. He was growing old, and soon could do little, and had even thought of resigning now, and so on, and so forth. The upshot was that, because of his representations, and as a reward for conniving at this illegal burial, the prioress said he might bring in his brother, and that she would place the granddaughter in the school.

"All is arranged and nothing so," said Fauchelevent, as he opened the door of the cottage, where his guests were eating the simple breakfast they had found in the gardener's cupboard. "The difficulty still is to get you out. I can carry out the girl in my pannier, well wrapped up, and leave her with my cousin for a day, and nobody will know it. I have my special door which opens into the yard; you will tell her to be very quiet. But you—. Now this is what I have thought."

He sat down and told what he had learned and had promised as to the secret burial, and that he was still in a quandary how to fill that coffin so as to deceive the government's undertakers.

"Put me in it," said Jean Valjean. Fauchelevent was stupefied, but after a time he fell in with Valjean's desperate plan, and the venture was painfully but successfully carried out—a second mystery in the night's dark program.

The anxiety of both men had centered upon what might go wrong at the cemetery, when the time should come to release the "body;" and so many delays and mischances actually did happen there, in spite of the loneliness and obscurity of the place and the ceremony, that it was only by the narrowest and most heart-sickening margin that Fauche-



THE FUNERAL OF A NUN



"I CAN CARRY OUT THE GIRL IN MY PANNIER"

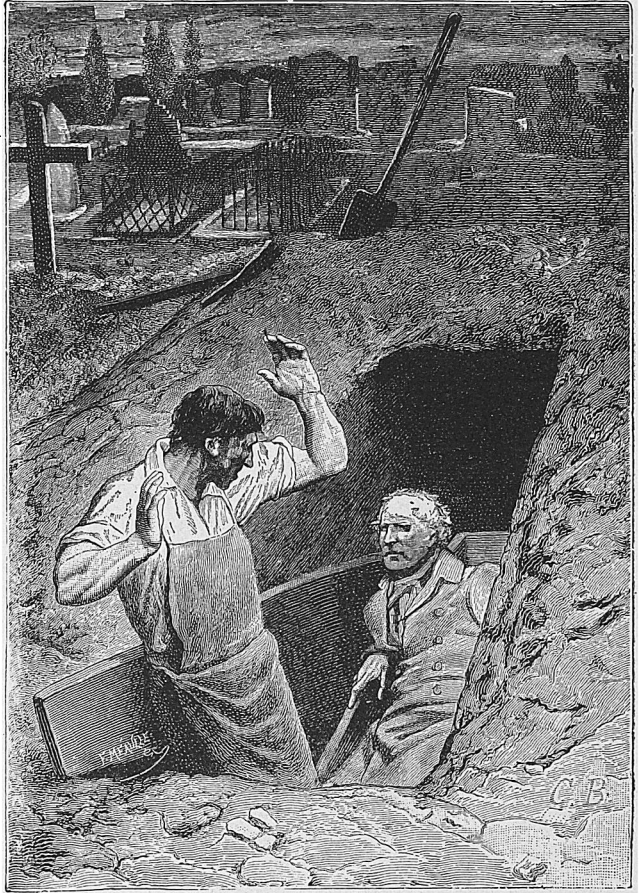
levent was able to delude the grave-digger, Gribier, entice him away to drink, and at last rescue Jean Valjean from his awful prison, restore him to consciousness and get him into a place of safety.

A few hours later both men were again inside the convent, Cosette had become a pupil, and Jean Valjean was commissioned assistant gardener, and given a bell to wear at his knee.

This convent was to Jean Valjean like an island surrounded by gulfs, and these four walls were henceforth the world for him; he saw enough of the sky there to be secure, and enough of Cosette to be happy. He lived with old Fauchelevent in the cottage, cultivated the garden, pruned the trees and was very useful.

Cosette had permission to spend an hour daily with him, and at the fixed hour she ran to the cottage, and when she entered it filled it with paradise. Jean Valjean expanded, and felt his own happiness grow with the happiness which he caused Cosette. All that surrounded him—this garden, these flowers, these children uttering merry cries, these grave and simple women, these silent cloisters—slowly penetrated him, and gradually his soul became composed of silence like this cloister, of perfume like these flowers, of peace like this garden, of simplicity like these women, and of joy like these children. And then he thought how two houses of God had in turn received him at two critical moments of his life, the first when all doors were closed and human society repulsed him, the second at the moment when human society was beginning to hunt him down again, and the hulks were yawning for him; and that, had it not been for the former, he would have fallen back into crime, and but for the latter, into punishment. In these meditations pride vanished; he felt himself insignificant; all that had entered his life led him back to the bishop's holy injunction; his heart melted into gratitude, and he loved more and more.

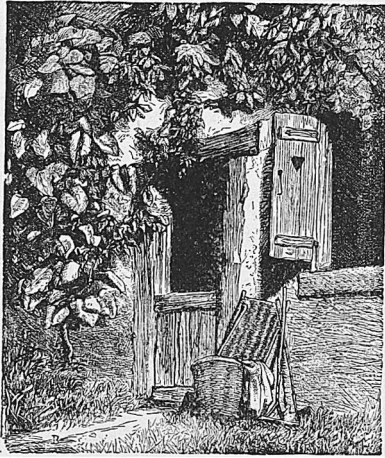
Several years passed thus, and Cosette grew, and Jean Valjean was happy.



THE RESURRECTION AT THE GRAVE

CHAPTER XII

MARIUS, BARON PONTMERCY



THE GARDENER'S COTTAGE

kicked him out into life, and he was a noisy, pale, active, sharp, impudent lad, with a cunning and sickly look. He came and went, sung, played at hopscotch, searched the gutters, pilfered a little, but gayly, like cats and sparrows, laughed when he was called a scamp, and felt angry when called a thief. He had no

EIGHT or nine years after these incidents there might be noticed in the regions of the Chateau d'Eau, a boy eleven or twelve years of age, dressed in a man's trousers, and a woman's jacket. He was called Little Gavroche. His parents had



COSETTE AND HER GRANDFATHER

bed, no bread, no fire, no love; but he was happy because he was free.

Still, it happened every two or three months that he said—"Well, I'll go and see mamma." Then he quitted the boulevard, crossed the river to the Salpêtrière, and arrived—where? Exactly at that double No. 50-52, which the reader knows as the Maison Gorbeau. At this period No. 50-52 was, strange to say, inhabited by several persons, who had no acquaintance with each other. The chief lodger of Jean Valjean's day was dead, and her place had been taken by another exactly like her, called Madame Burgon. The most wretched of all the few persons in the house were a family, consisting of a father, mother and two nearly grown



THE INTRODUCTION TO THE PRIORRESS

daughters—all four living in the same attic. The father, on hiring the room, stated that his name was Jondrette, and remarked that if any one were to ask for a Pole, or an Italian, or even a Spaniard, he was the person sought for. This was the family of the merry little vagabond, but when he joined it he met with a cold hearth and cold heart. He did not mind it, for he knew nothing different; and yet it was plain that the woman loved her daughters. The room which Jondrette occupied was the last in the passage, and the cell next to it was occupied by a very poor young student named Marius. Let us make his acquaintance and learn his history.

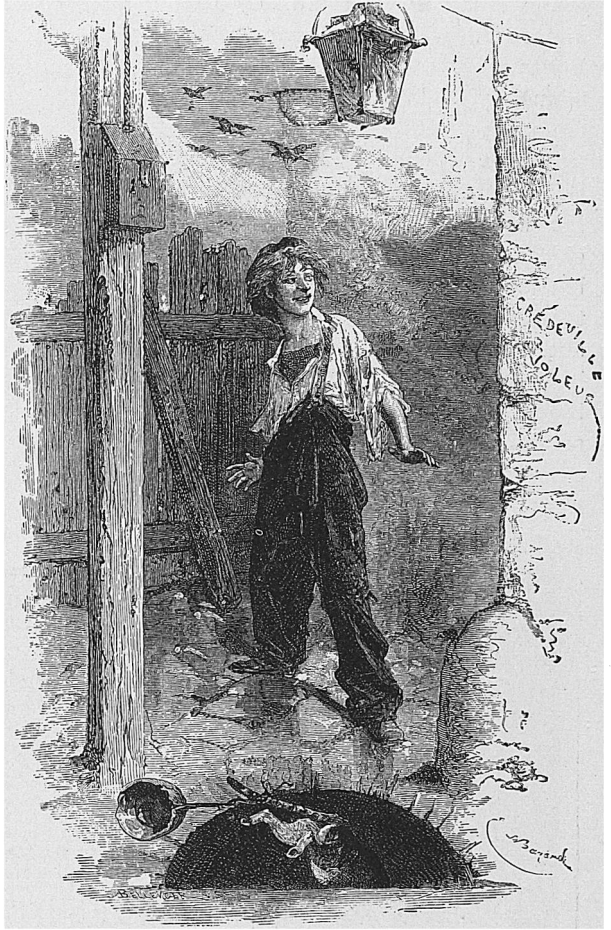
There are still a few persons who can remember a gentleman of the name of M. Gillenormand, and speak kindly about him. He had, at this period of which we write, passed his ninetieth year, walked upright, talked loudly, saw clearly, drank heartily, and ate, slept and snored. He was moderately wealthy, superficial, rapidly and easily angered, and he would storm at an absurd trifle.

He had married twice. By his first wife he had a girl, who was now an old maid—an old virtue—with one of the most acute noses and most obtuse intellects imaginable. Her only affection was for her grand-nephew, an officer in the Lancers, named Theodule. The child of his second wife was a girl who died at the age of thirty, and who had married a soldier of fortune who had served in the armies of the republic and of the empire, won the cross of the Legion of Honor at Austerlitz, and his colonel's commission at Waterloo.

"He is the disgrace of my family," the old gentleman used to say, angrily.

There was also in this house a child, a little boy, who was always trembling and dumb in the old gentleman's presence. M. Gillenormand never spoke to this boy except with a stern voice, and at times with upraised cane. "Come here, sir—scamp, scoundrel, come here—answer me, fellow—let me see you, vagabond!" etc., etc. Nevertheless he adored the boy, for he was his grandson, being the son of his dead daughter and that officer of Napoleon's army whom M. Gillenormand called "the disgrace of the family."

This officer, in 1817, lived alone in the village of Vernon, occupying a tiny

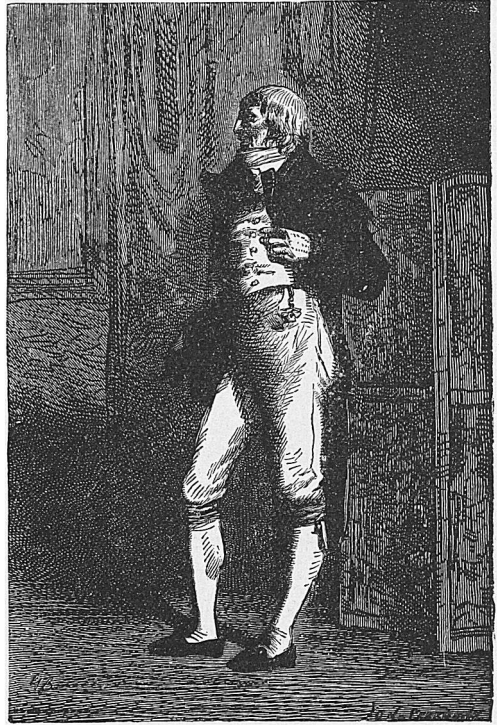


LITTLE GAVROCHE

house on the bank of the Loire.

The square of land which he called his garden was celebrated in the town for the beauty of the flowers he cultivated; and almost his only friend was Abbé Mabœuf, an old priest.

The name of this man, which may be found often in the military chronicles and literature of his time, was George Pontmercy. He had been a soldier from boyhood, and to few men had fallen so many adventures, and still fewer would have acquitted themselves so wisely and bravely wherever they were tried. He was already gray and a major of cuirassiers in Dubois's brigade at the battle of Waterloo; and he it was who took the colors of the Limburg battalion, and himself threw them at the emperor Napoleon's feet. He was covered with blood, for, on seizing the colors, he received a saber-cut across the face. The emperor, who was pleased, cried out to him, "You are a colonel, a baron, and an



MONSIEUR GILLENORMAND



COLONEL PONTMERCY AMID HIS FLOWERS

officer of the Legion of Honor!" Pontmercy answered, "Sire, I thank you on behalf of my widow."

An hour later he fell into the ravine of Ohain; and here something happened to him, which constitutes one of the curious coincidences of this history. He was drawn out, unconscious, at midnight, from a heap of slain, by a nocturnal prowler who wished the more conveniently to rob him. The movement and the fresh air brought him to life. The officer murmured, with agony in his voice: "Who has won the battle?"

"The English," the marauder answered, then added, turning to go away, for he had all the man's valuables by this time, and heard footsteps: "A patrol is coming."



DEATH OF COLONEL PONTMERCY

do you remember mine; it is Pontmercy, Colonel in the Dubois brigade."

After Waterloo the government put him on half-pay and sent him to Vernon, but King Louis XVIII recognized neither his quality as officer of the Legion of Honor, nor his commission as colonel, nor his title of baron. Nevertheless, he felt his right to them and wore his ribbon and assumed his title when he pleased, though he lived so poor and retired a life, and had no ambition above fine roses.

In 1815 his wife, a most admirable and worthy woman, had died, leaving a child. This child would have been the colonel's delight in his solitude, but the grandfather imperiously claimed him, declaring that if he were not given up to him he would disinherit him. The father yielded for the sake of the little one, and, unable to love his son, he took to loving flowers. The boy, who was called Marius, knew that he had a father; and gradually, from the remarks and innuendos of his grandfather's acquaintances, learned enough of what he supposed was truth to regard his parent with shame.

While he was fast growing up in this way, the colonel every two or three months came furtively to Paris, and posted himself at St. Sulpice, at the hour when Aunt Gillenormand took Marius to mass. Concealed behind a pillar, motionless, and scarce daring to breathe, he looked at this boy—the scarred warrior frightened at an old maid and trembling before his own son.

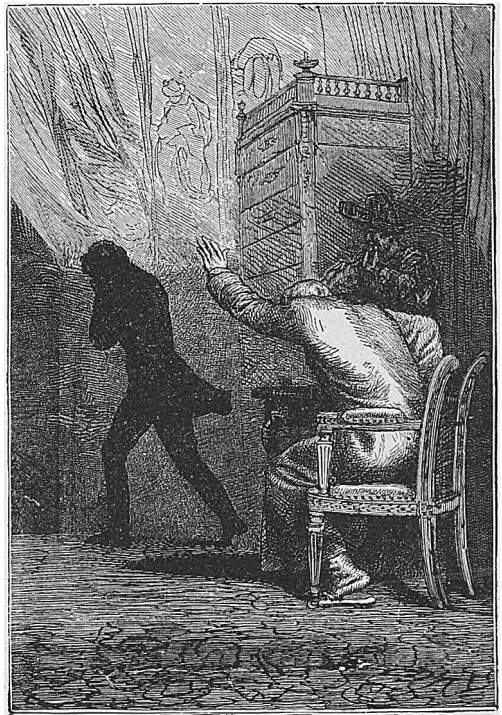
The officer, raising his arm with difficulty, stopped him, crying out—"You have saved my life; who are you?"

The prowler answered rapidly and in a low voice,—“I belong, like yourself, to the French army, but I must leave you; for if I were caught I should be shot. I have saved your life, so now get out of the scrape as best you can.”

“What is your rank?”

“Sergeant Thenardier, at your service.”

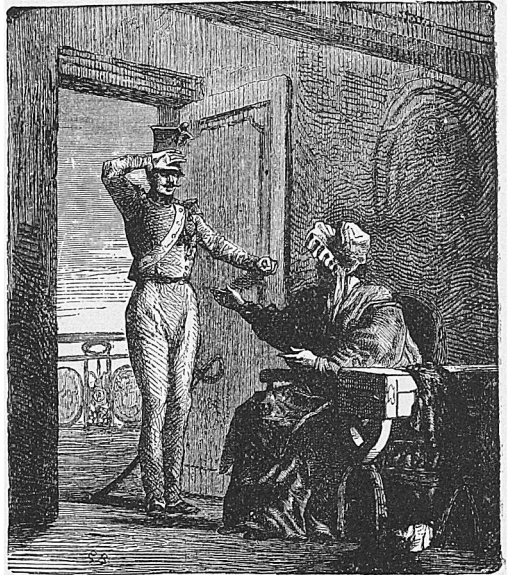
“I shall not forget that name,” the officer said; “and



MARIUS DRIVEN FROM HOME

. Marius went to school and college, and finally into the law-school, where his studies and retirement turned him into a pedant, and hardened a character, worthy almost to harshness and fierce almost to savageness. This brought him to his seventeenth year, in 1827, when suddenly word came that his father was dying. He hastened away to Vernon, but it was too late. The scarred old soldier, and desolate, loving man, had gone to his reward. As the lad gazed he learned respect, but it was too late to become affectionate. Nothing of value was left to him except a paper bearing the following:

For my Son: The emperor made me a baron on the field of Waterloo, and as the Restoration contests this title, which I purchased with my blood, my son will assume it and wear it. Of course he will be worthy



"AN OFFICER IN THE LANCERS, NAMED THEODULE"

of it. At this same battle a sergeant saved my life, his name is Thenardier, and I believe that he has recently kept a small inn in a village near Paris, either Chelles or Montfermeil. If my son meet this Thenardier he will do all he can for him.

The impression this death made upon Marius deepened, and was enlarged when he began to investigate his father's life and character—a task which soon became the immediate object of his life. He went away mysteriously for days at a time, saw little of the Gillenormands, became distraught, and gradually came to hate his grandfather and all his politics, theories and cynicism, and to adore only the memory of his father, whose history he was secretly studying. At last he was provoked by a fit of rage in the old gentleman to declare something of his new feelings and then rush out of the house. M. Gillenormand searched his room, dis-



MARIUS DISCOVERED AT HIS FATHER'S GRAVE

covered the written message and other treasured relics of the dead colonel, and, horror! cards which the youth had had printed, with the address "Baron Marius Pontmercy." When Marius came back, it was only to meet a storm, and an expulsion from the family.

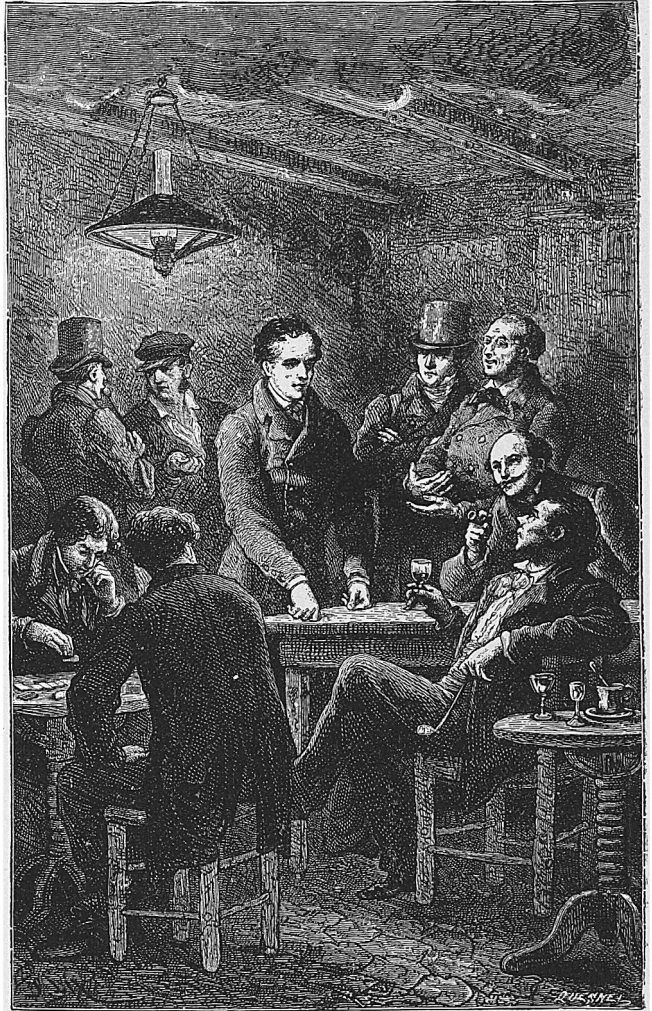
Marius hurried from the house without knowing where he was going, taking only thirty francs, his watch and some clothes in a carpet-bag; but the sorest part of the affair was that he could not find the shagreen case which contained his father's "will." He believed his grandfather had thrown it into the fire; but this was not true.

Marius jumped into a cabriolet, and drove away toward the Latin Quarter.

CHAPTER XIII

THE FAIRY OF THE LUXEMBOURG GARDENS

AT this epoch revolution was in the air, young men loved ideas, and many small political and social coteries existed. One such was called "Friends of the A. B. C." It assembled at two places in Paris; at a cabaret called Corinthe near the Halles, to which we shall revert hereafter, and near the Pantheon in a small café on the Place St. Michel, known as the Café Musain; the first of these meeting-places was contiguous to the workmen, and the second to the students. The ordinary discussions of the friends of the A. B. C. were held in a back room of the Café Musain. This room, some distance from the coffee-room, with which it communicated by a very long passage, had two windows and an issue by a secret staircase into the little Rue des Grés. They smoked, drank, played, and laughed there; they spoke very loudly about everything, and in a whisper about the other thing. Most of the Friends were students, of whom the leaders were Enjolras, Combeferre, Jean Prouvaire, Feuilly, Courfeyrac, Bahorel, Lesgle or Laigle, Joly, and Grantaire. These young men formed



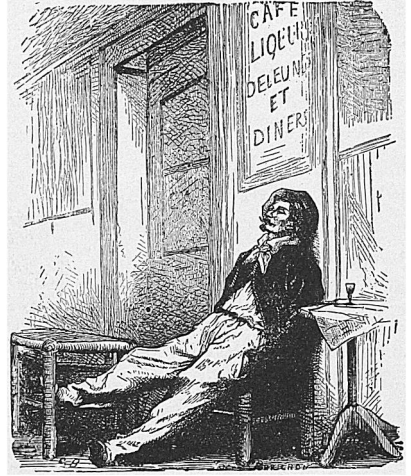
THE FRIENDS OF THE A B C

a species of family through their friendship, and all came from the south, excepting Laigle, who belonged at Meaux.

Marius was brought into this coterie, though ignorant of its meaning and purposes, through his forming an accidental acquaintance with Courfeyrac on the day when he drove away from his home, and taking a room next to his.

The club and its talk did not convert him; it only upset his innocence and ideals, and left him with a gloomy sense of shock and desolation.

Presently more material troubles attended him. He was forced to sell his watch and surplus clothes to pay his rent, and to work as a publisher's hack to support life. He went on with his studies, refused the allowance—a really liberal one—which his grandfather had ordered his aunt to transmit to him, and descended to the depths of poverty. Nevertheless, he managed to pass his examinations, and was called to the bar. He informed the Gillenormands of this, but still declined their bounty, since it was unaccompanied by respectful recognition. He was supposed to live with Courfeyrac, where he went for his letters; but in fact he inhabited, as has been said, the



COURFEYRAC

garret in the Maison Gorbeau, which had no fireplace and almost no furniture. For several years his income did not exceed seven hundred francs a year, but he kept true to himself and he did not run in debt. He never saw his grandfather, whom he had come to regard gently, and who really loved him, though the young man did not think so; and he never forgot his father or ceased to search for that Thenardier, whom he knew only from his father's letter, and whom he enveloped in a halo of gratitude and glory. He had discovered at Montfermeil that the inn had failed, and that long ago the publican and his family had fled before their creditors to parts unknown. His dream



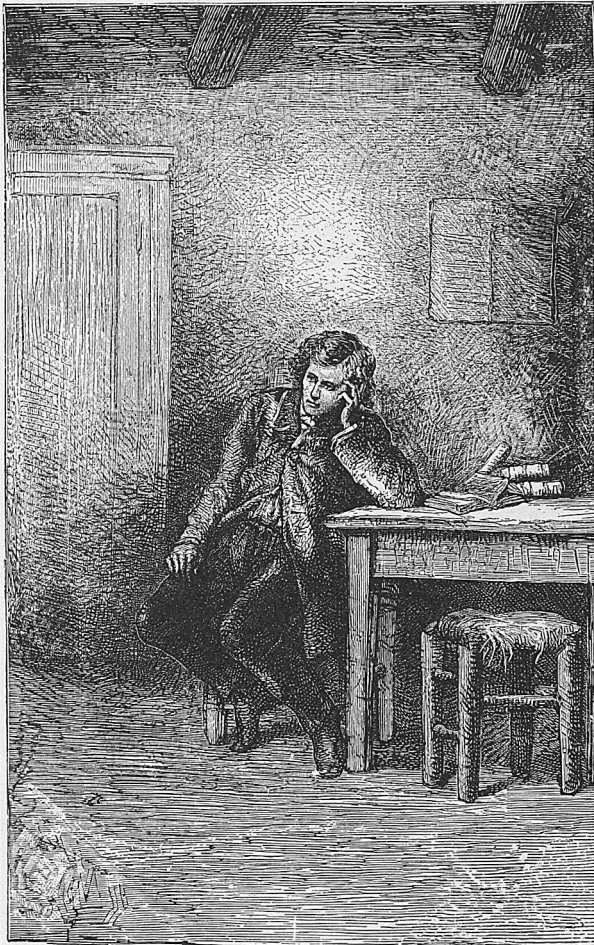
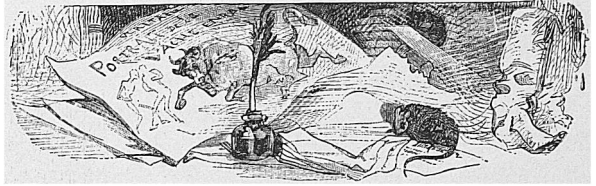
WINE AND POLITICS

was that some day he should find this brave old sergeant and rescue him from his misfortunes as an act of requital.

Marius lived in solitude, rarely visiting the A. B. C. Friends, and intimate only with Courfeyrac and Mabœuf, brother of his father's friend the Abbé, a sweet old botanist and book-lover, dwelling with an aged house-keeper, Mother Plutarch, in a secluded cottage at Austerlitz.

In this solitude Marius's delight was in long contemplative walks. He was now just twenty, and a handsome young

fellow of middle height, with very black hair, a lofty and intelligent forehead, and thoughtfulness and innocence spread upon his face. Courfeyrac was accustomed to rally him because he shunned women; but he was really only indifferent to them. There came to be, however, one exception. For more than a year Marius had



MARIUS IN HIS GARRET AT THE MAISON GORBEAU

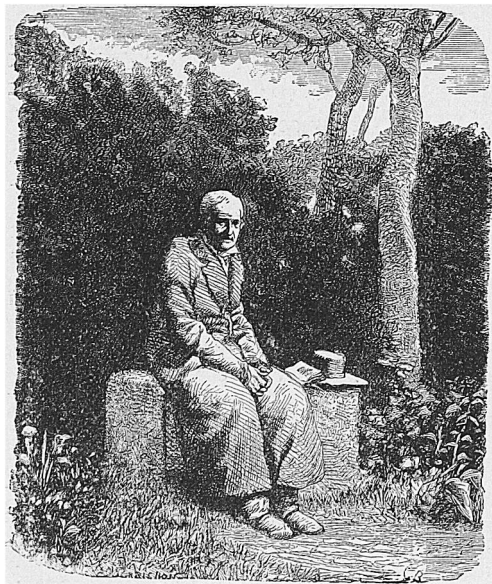
noticed in a deserted walk of the Luxembourg, a man and a very young lady nearly always seated side by side. The man seemed to be about sixty years of age; and the whole of his person offered the robust and fatigued appearance of military men who have retired from service. He looked kind, but unapproachable. His hair was very white. The first time that the young lady who accompanied him sat down with him upon the bench which they seemed to have adopted, she was about thirteen or fourteen, so thin as to be almost ugly, awkward, insignificant, and promising to have, perhaps, very fine eyes some day; still they were always raised to the old gentleman with a species of displeasing assurance. She wore the garb at once old and childish of boarders at a convent—a badly cut dress of coarse black merino. The girl talked incessantly and gayly; the old man spoke but little, and at times he fixed

upon her eyes filled with ineffable paternity. Courfeyrac, struck by the dress of the girl and the old man's hair, had christened the former Mlle Lanoire, and the father, Monsieur Leblanc. Marius saw them nearly daily, at the same hour, during a year, after which he broke off his daily walk in the Luxembourg for nearly six months without any special reason.

One day, however, he returned to it. It was a beautiful summer day, and Marius was as joyful as men are when the weather is fine. He went straight to "his" walk, and when he reached the end he noticed the well-known couple seated on the same bench, but when he drew near he found that, while it was the same man, it did not seem to be the same girl. The person he now saw was a tall and lovely creature, possessing the charming outlines of the woman, at the precise moment when they are still combined with the most simple graces of the child. He saw admirable auburn hair, tinted with gilt veins, a forehead that seemed made of marble, cheeks made of a rose-leaf, and an exquisite mouth. At the first moment Marius thought that it was another daughter of the old gentleman's, but when he examined her attentively, he perceived that in six months the girl had become a maiden. She was no longer the boarding-school miss; taste had come to her with beauty, and she was well dressed, with a species of simple, rich, and unaffected elegance.



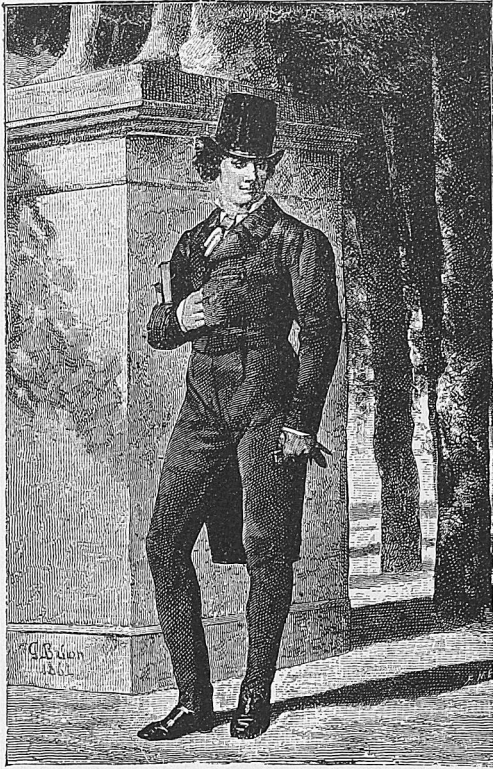
FATHER MABEUF AND MOTHER PLUTARCH



"A SWEET OLD BOTANIST AND BOOK-LOVER"

The air was warm, the Luxembourg was inundated with light and shade, and Marius opened his whole soul to nature. He was thinking of nothing, he loved and breathed, he passed by the bench, the young lady raised her eyes to him, and their two glances met. There was nothing and there was everything; it was a strange flash. She let her eyes fall, and he continued his walk. There is a day on which every maiden looks in this way, and woe to the man on whom her glance falls!

The next day, at the accustomed hour, Marius took out of the drawers his new coat, his new trousers, his new hat, and his new boots; he dressed himself in this complete panoply, put on gloves,



MARIUS IN THE LUXEMBOURG GARDENS

and material labor, the soul-struggles of chastity, and his benevolent ecstasy in the presence of creation, had prepared Marius for that possession which is called passion. A whole month passed, during which Marius went daily to the Luxembourg. He grew bolder, and went nearer the bench; but he did not pass in front of it, obeying at once the timid instincts and prudent tactics of lovers. He arranged his stations so as to be seen as much as possible by the young lady and as little as possible by the old gentleman; and she, for her part, turned her charming profile toward him with a vague smile.

In three or four weeks Ma-

an extraordinary luxury, and went off to the Luxembourg. The young lady was there, of course, and he heard, as he passed her bench, an ineffable voice. She was talking quietly and was very beautiful; he felt this, though he did not attempt to look at her. The third day he returned to the Luxembourg, but did not go beyond his half-way bench; he sat down there, as on the previous day, regarding from a distance, and seeing distinctly, the white bonnet, the black dress, and, above all, the blue radiance of the sky. He did not move or return home till the gates were closed.

A fortnight passed in this way; Marius no longer went to the Luxembourg to walk, but always to sit down at the same spot, without knowing why. He every morning put on his new coat, although he did not show himself, and began again on the morrow.

Isolation, pride, independence, a taste for nature, the absence of daily



MLE LANOIRE AND MONSIEUR LEBLANC

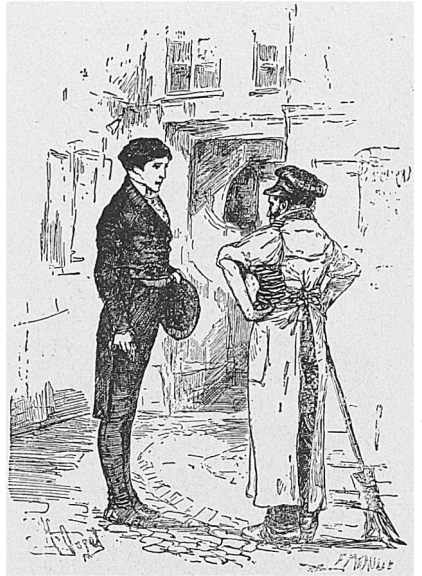
rius wished to know where she lived, and made his first fault, by following the pair home and questioning the porter, who gave short and suspicious answers. On the morrow M. Leblanc made but a short appearance at the Luxembourg, and went away in broad daylight. Marius followed them to the Rue de l'Ouest, as was his habit, and on reaching the gateway M. Leblanc made his daughter go in first, then stopped, turned, and looked intently at Marius. The next day they did not come to the Luxembourg, and Marius waited in vain the whole day. At nightfall, he went to the Rue de l'Ouest, and noticed a light in the third-floor windows, and he walked about beneath these windows till the light was extinguished. The next day there was no one at the Gardens, but Marius waited all day, and then went to keep his night-watch under the windows.

Eight days passed in this way, and M. Leblanc and his daughter did not again appear at the Luxembourg. On the eighth night, when he arrived beneath the windows, there was no light.

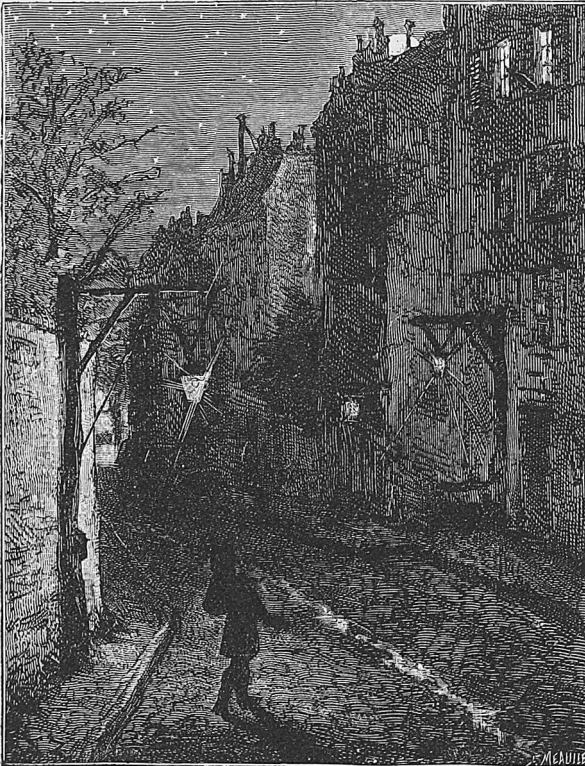
"What," he said to himself, "the lamp is not lighted, can they have gone out?" He waited till ten o'clock, till midnight, till one o'clock, but no light was kindled at the third-floor windows, and nobody entered the house. He went away with gloomy thoughts. On the morrow—for he only lived from morrow to morrow, and he had no to-day, so to speak—he saw nobody at the Luxembourg, as he expected, and at nightfall he went to the house. There was no light at the window, the shutters were closed, and the third floor was all darkness. Marius walked in and addressed the porter:

"The gentleman on the third floor?"

"Gone away," the porter answered.



"GONE AWAY"



THE THIRD-FLOOR WINDOWS

(To be continued)